

## SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

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Tuesday, November 16, 2021, 5:30 p.m, Old Schoolhouse Common and Zoom

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Present: Selectboard members Richard Baker, Christopher Martin, and Michele Gonzales; Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe; Visitors: Taber Allison and Bob Popp (Conservation Commission); Will Schwarz (Fire Chief); Susan Green (Library Director); Kate Hayes (Zoning Administrator)

At 5:30 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Martin

**Changes or additions to the agenda:** maintenance contracts for generators, sidewalk snow removal

**Public Comment:**

**Minutes:** The Board approved the minutes of the October 19 and November 2 meetings.

**Conservation Commission request for funding for inventory:** Taber explained that this is a long-standing goal of the Conservation Commission. They feel this is a high priority and would aid in town planning. It has been done in neighboring towns. They are requesting funding for a consultant that would provide coordination of effort, and desktop analysis to identify priority parcels. Commission members would provide in-kind services working with the consultant. The Commission would contact landowners of priority parcels to obtain written permission before visiting properties. A report would be prepared and would become part of the town's planning resources. The budget would be about \$20,000. Rich asked how the budget was developed. Most of the funding would be going to the site visits. Some would go towards outreach, and to preliminary desktop analysis. Cabot had a budget of \$10,000 but it wasn't enough to do all of the site visits that were identified – they made it to less than half. Bobbi asked where the money would come from – the general fund or the conservation fund. Bob indicated that they would be open to using some of the conservation fund but they also have other uses for that money. He noted that the conservation fund is made up of proceeds from the plant sale, and not tax dollars, while neighboring towns add to their fund from the town budget every year. Rich explained that the Selectboard budget is typically not discretionary, and large expenses that are discretionary are often voted as separate articles. The Commission will come back to the Board with more information, and the Selectboard will consider putting it on the warning for town meeting as a separate article.

**Conservation Commission appointment:** Rich moved to appoint Luke Boushee to fill the vacancy on the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. All in favor.

**ARPA update:** Bobbi updated the Board on the questions that she asked of VLCT. Outdoor recreation is an allowable use if it benefits people who were disproportionately affected by COVID, and low-income people were disproportionately affected. It still isn't clear what that means and how to quantify the benefit. It is possible that the federal government might change the rules about the use of the money.

**Highway Budget:** The highway crew would like to buy a piece of equipment that they could use to blow the leaves out of the ditches, to make the stone ditches last longer. It would cost \$8,100. If the leaves are left in the ditches, they rot and become silt and end up in the streams. Removing the leaves would be a good stormwater mitigation measure, and would be eligible for ARPA funds. The board reviewed the equipment fund projections. Equipment prices have been increasing faster than inflation, and the truck and body companies have been purchased by larger dealers and it is not known what effect this will have on prices.

**Fire Department Budget:** Will presented his budget for the Fire Department. He is concerned that in 15 years we will need a new engine, and it will cost approximately \$450,000 to \$500,000. Both trucks have been refurbished in the last few years so we are set for about 15 years, but we need to be planning for the purchase of new trucks. Other than that, there are not many changes to expenses. They need new SCBA's that will cost about \$80,000, but they will likely be funded with a grant.

The Town received an inquiry about the dry hydrant work that was done on Maple Hill. Will explained that the work is exempt from permitting.

**Library Budget:** Susan presented the Library budget. It is level funded with the exception of staffing and fundraising. There were not as many fundraising opportunities because of COVID. Rich recommended that the Trustees should take more money out of the dividends so that the increase is lower. Susan will bring this suggestion to the Trustees.

**Old Schoolhouse Common Maintenance:** Susan explained that maintenance is not getting done at the building and it is hard to know who to call when there is an issue. Chris explained that Dan Tetreault has given his notice but we need to advertise for a new maintenance person.

**SECD funding:** tabled

**Executive Session:** At 8:00, Rich moved to enter executive session to discuss a legal matter. Chris seconded – all in favor. The Board returned to open session at 8:40.

**Town Clerk's Budget:** Bobbi explained that Winnie is retiring in August, so the budget includes money for some overlap in Assistant Town Clerk salaries. The town needs to upgrade our computer services for cybersecurity, so that budget has also been increased.

**Personnel Budget:** The CPI-U increase is 5.6%. The Board asked Bobbi to calculate what the change in budgets would be if an additional 1% raise was added, to give the employees a raise beyond the cost of living adjustment.

**Recreation Economy for Rural Communities:** Rich will apply for this grant. It would provide support to help the Town develop recreational resources to improve the local economy. Chris moved to write a letter of support for the grant application. Rich seconded – all in favor.

**Executive Session:** At 9:15 Chris moved to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Rich seconded – all in favor. The Board returned to open session at 9:30.

**Curb cut – Harris:** The Board received a report that there is a new curb cut on the Henry Harris property. Bobbi will check with the road crew to see if this is a new curb cut and whether or not there is a permit. If it is an illegal curb cut, Bobbi will send him an application.

**Expenses, Permits & Payroll:** Selectboard members read and approved reports for General Expenses and Payroll.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Town Clerk

The foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the November 16, 2021 Selectboard Meeting.  
A True Record. Attest, \_\_\_\_\_, Town Clerk

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